

and implored with a pathetic vehemence rare in the conferences of statesmen. Many tears were shed. At length the King was induced to give up, at least for the present, his design of abdicating the government. But he announced another design which he was fully determined not to give up. Since he was still to remain at the head of the English administration, he would go himself to Ireland. He would try whether the whole royal authority, strenuously exerted on the spot where the fate of the empire was to be decided, would suffice to prevent speculation and to maintain discipline.

That he had seriously meditated a retreat to Holland long continued to be a secret, not only to the multitude, but even to the Queen.¹

Macaulay was plainly relying upon Burnet, whose story is as follows :

He was once very near a desperate resolution ; he thought he could not trust the Tories, and he resolved he would not trust the Whigs : so he fancied the Tories would be true to the Queen, and confide in her, though they would not in him. He therefore resolved to go over to Holland, and leave the government in the Queen's hands : so he called the Marquis of Caermarthen, with the Earl of Shrewsbury, and some few more, and told them, he had a convoy ready, and was resolved to leave all in the Queen's hands; since he could not see how he could extricate himself out of the difficulties into which the animosities of parties had brought him : they pressed him vehemently to lay aside

all such
desperate resolutions, and to comply with the
present neces-
sity. Much passion appeared among them :
the debate
was so warm, that many tears were shed : in
conclusion, the
King resolved to change his first design, into
another
better resolution, of going over in person, to put
an end to the
war in Ireland ; this was told me some time
after by the
Earl of Shrewsbury : but the Queen knew
nothing of it,

¹IV, 1789-90 (xv).